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American Samoa

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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Note: The information contained in the present working paper has been derived from public sources, including those of the territorial Government, and from information transmitted on 23 January 2012 to the Secretary-General by the administering Power under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations. Further details may be found in previous working papers available from www.un.org/en/decolonization/workingpapers.shtml.

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The Territory at a glance

Territory: American Samoa is a Non-Self-Governing Territory under the Charter. It is an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States of America, administered by the Office of Insular Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior.

Representative of administering Power: United States Department of the Interior, which has a representative resident on the ground.[a]

Geography: Located in the South Pacific, approximately 3,700 kilometres south-west of Hawaii and 4,350 kilometres north-east of Australia. The territory consists of seven islands: Tutuila and Aunuu, in addition to Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u (known as the Manu'a Islands) and the two coral atolls of Swains and Rose.

Land area: 200 km².

Exclusive economic zone: 404,391 km².[b]

Population: 55,519 (2010 estimate).

Ethnic composition: Native Pacific Islander: 91.6 per cent; Asian: 2.8 per cent; White: 1.2 per cent; Other ethnic origin: 2 per cent.

Languages: English, Samoan.

Seat of Government: Fagatogo.

Head of territorial Government: Governor Togiola T. A. Tulafono.

Main political parties: Democrat, Republican.

Elections: The most recent elections were held in November 2008; the next elections are due in November 2012.

Legislature: Bicameral "Fono", or legislative assembly.

Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita: $7,190 (2009 chained-dollar estimate).

Economy: Fishing and agriculture.

Unemployment rate: 29.8 per cent (2005 estimate).

Monetary unit: United States dollar.

Brief history: It is believed that the Samoan archipelago was settled some 3,000 years ago by people migrating from South-East Asia. The Dutch were the first Europeans to discover the islands in 1722 and Dutch settlers arrived in the early 1800s, followed by missionaries in 1830. The 1899 Treaty of Berlin, also known as the "Anglo-German Samoa Convention", apportioned to the United States the eastern islands of the Samoan archipelago.

[a] Secretary's Order 2657 of 29 August 1951 and Secretary's Order 3009, as amended, of 3 November 1977, set forth the extent and nature of the authority of the Government of American Samoa and the manner in which the authority is to be exercised (see the Electronic Library of Interior Policies, United States Department of the Interior).

[b] Exclusive economic zone data from the "Sea Around Us" project, a collaboration between the University of British Columbia and the Pew Environment Group (www.seaaroundus.org).

I. Constitutional, legal and political issues

1. By the late 1800s, internal strife among the chiefs of the islands of the Samoan archipelago and struggles among the colonial Powers of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States led to a period of instability. Deeds ceding these islands to the United States from the early 1900s were accepted by an Act of Congress on 20 February 1929. Pursuant to that Act, American Samoans were given the status of United States nationals. The Act provided for an American Samoan Government with all civil, judicial and military powers to be vested in a designee of the President of the United States. As the United States interest in the area had been mainly military, the Territory was placed under the jurisdiction of the United States Navy. On 29 June 1951, Executive Order 10264 of the United States President transferred administrative responsibility for the Territory to the Department of the Interior.

2. American Samoa is an "unincorporated and unorganized" Territory under United States law. Not all provisions of the United States Constitution or of United States law apply. Residents of American Samoa are not United States citizens. They are United States nationals who can freely enter the United States and work or reside anywhere they choose. Children born in the Territory to foreign parents become citizens of either the mother's or the father's country of origin, not United States nationals. American Samoans may not vote in general elections in the United States, but are permitted to participate in presidential primaries and caucuses.

3. The 1960 Constitution of American Samoa was revised in 1967 and subsequently amended in 1970 and 1977. Any amendments or modifications to the Constitution of American Samoa (as approved by the Secretary of the Interior) may be made only by an Act of the United States Congress. In 2008, a referendum that would have revised an aspect of the Constitution was narrowly defeated. The June-July 2010 Constitutional Convention proposed amendments or revisions to the current Constitution, including those related to the prohibition of further individualization of communal lands in the Territory, the establishment of an impartial jury in all criminal prosecutions, the enhancement of the Samoan language and culture in the educational system, the management and preservation of the natural resources of the Territory in accordance with local laws, and the provision for an impeachment of the Territory's leaders. However, at the November 2010 general election, the voters overwhelmingly defeated the proposed changes.

4. The Territory's Constitution provides for separate executive and legislative branches and an independent judiciary. The executive branch comprises a Governor and a Lieutenant-Governor elected for four-year terms by universal adult suffrage. All American Samoans over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. The Governor is responsible for executing both American Samoan and United States laws and has veto power with regard to legislation passed by the "Fono", the American Samoa legislature.

5. In November 2008, Governor Togiola T. A. Tulafono was re-elected, as was Lieutenant-Governor Faoa Ipulasi A. Sunia. Their terms of office will expire in November 2012, when the next elections are due to be held.

6. The Fono is a bicameral legislature, comprising an 18-member Senate, whose members are chosen by 14 tribal councils, and a 21-member House of Representatives, 20 of whom are elected by popular vote and 1 of whom is

appointed as a non-voting delegate from Swains Island. Only a "matai", the traditional chief of an extended family, or "aiga", can become a senator. Senators hold office for a four-year term and representatives for a two-year term. The Fono may pass laws with regard to all local affairs, provided that they are not inconsistent with United States laws in force in the Territory or with United States treaties or international agreements.

7. Since 1981, American Samoa has elected by direct vote a delegate to the United States House of Representatives for a two-year term. The delegate may vote in committees and on the floor except on final passage. During the 2010 general election, Mr. Eni F. H. Faleomavaega was re-elected for a twelfth consecutive two-year term to the United States Congress.

8. The judiciary system consists of a High Court, for which the Chief Justice and the Associate Justices are appointed by the United States Secretary of the Interior, and the local district and village courts, for which the judges are appointed by the Governor. The High Court is separated into Appellate, Trial, Land and Titles, and Family, Drug and Alcohol divisions. The United States Congress has granted limited federal jurisdiction to the High Court to hear certain cases involving federal statutory issues. Examples of federal judicial power delegated to the High Court include the authority to decide Occupational Safety and Health Administration issues and ship mortgage actions in American Samoa. Other matters of federal law arising in the Territory are adjudicated in the United States district courts, mainly the federal courts in Hawaii and Washington, D.C. Since American Samoa is not part of a United States federal judicial district or circuit, there are no statutory provisions for appealing decisions of the High Court to a federal district court.

9. In his statement at the Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: goals and expected accomplishments, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from 31 May to 2 June 2011, the representative of American Samoa recalled that, in the past, the Territory had requested the Special Committee to remove it from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories because its "unincorporated and unorganized" status was akin to that of a self-governing Territory. He noted that, while the Territory's position was unchanged, it was time to be more concerned about how American Samoa could progress politically and economically while respecting the concerns of the United States and the United Nations in the process. He stated that American Samoa wished to move forward on issues of political status, local autonomy, self-governance and economic development. He noted that, in the light of the positions of the parties involved, nothing prevented the Territory, the administering Power and the United Nations from cooperating with the general objective of placing American Samoa on a path to greater local autonomy, self-governance and economic development.

10. He recalled the devastating effects of the United States decision to implement legislation in the Territory to put the minimum wage on a par with that of the United States, a decision taken without local consultation or appropriate study. Following efforts in the United States Congress, a study measuring the impact of the change in minimum wage had confirmed the serious damage that the initiative had inflicted on the economy and, consequently, the scheduled minimum wage increases had been delayed pending further study.

11. He also stressed that loss of local control over immigration and Customs could severely harm the Territory's economy, and highlighted the difficulties that the Territory faced in complying with federal requirements. Lastly, he pointed out that the lack of technical assistance and expertise truly to understand the effects of federal laws on the economy and form of government were extremely detrimental. In that regard, American Samoa could benefit from United Nations expertise and programmes.

12. In a letter to the Chair of the Special Committee in September 2011 in response to statements made at the Caribbean regional seminar, the representative of American Samoa to the United States Congress, Mr. Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, highlighted the importance of resolving the ambiguities in the two deeds of cession that formed the basis of American Samoa's relationship with the United States before seeking further negotiations on the Territory's political status. He recommended that the leaders of Tutuila, Aunuu, Swains Island and Manu'a should officially declare a union as one political entity or governing body and that a territorial convention should be called to discuss the existing political relationship with the United States. Subsequently, the Government of American Samoa should officially declare a statement of principles underlining the desire of the people of American Samoa either to amend some provisions of the two deeds or establish an entirely new agreement with the United States. The Government should then call a constitutional convention and organize a Government on the basis of the terms and conditions outlined in the agreement and not the Constitution of the United States.

13. He also pointed out the current and historic relationship between the Territory and the Special Committee, noting that the Committee had no authority to alter the relationship between American Samoa and the United States. In relation to the minimum wage law, he drew attention to the racism, gender inequality and prejudices to which American Samoan workers had fallen victim over the past 55 years. He noted that the wage increase was not the root cause of the collapse of the local economy and the tuna industry, suggesting that other factors such as the global recession, increased production costs, high fuel costs and better tax incentives elsewhere must also be considered. He further noted that the problems facing American Samoa were complex and could not be attributed to either the wage increase or the federal Government. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would uphold the United States position that the Special Committee had no authority to alter in any way the relationship between the United States and American Samoa and no mandate to engage the United States in negotiations on the status of the Territory.

II. Budget

14. In October 2011, the Governor of American Samoa signed into law, albeit with some objections, the final budget of the fiscal year 2012, which began on 1 October 2011. The total budget for the new fiscal year amounts to $382.94 million. The initial budget stood at $470.83 million, but was reduced by the Fono to $383.22 million as the American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA) received a budget only for the first quarter of the fiscal year.

III. Economic conditions

A. General

15. As noted in the previous working paper (A/AC.109/2011/12), in 2007 the United States Congress passed legislation authorizing a minimum wage increase in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. This legislation established an annual increase of $0.50 per hour until the wages equalled the federal minimum wage. Efforts by the American Samoan authorities, concerned about the negative effects of the legislation, led to the suspension of the measure in 2010 and 2011. Although the annual wage increases of $0.50 are scheduled to resume on 30 September 2012, on 16 December 2011, the United States Senate passed a bill, the Insular Areas Act, which includes a provision to delay the wage increases until 2015. The bill is currently awaiting consideration by the House of Representatives of the United States Congress. The current minimum wage in American Samoa is $4.18 (the minimum wage in 2006 ranged from $2.68 to $4.09, depending on the industry in which the worker was employed).

16. Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, American Samoa has received 67 awards (66 grants and 1 loan) for a total of $208,073,617. The funds received between 17 February 2009 and 30 September 2011 totalled $59,992,020. The Act required that the United States Government Accountability Office should report annually on the impact of the minimum wage increases (not later than 1 September 2011, 1 April 2013 and every two years thereafter until the minimum wage in the Territory met the federal minimum wage). The study should focus on key industries (tuna), employment and earnings since the beginning of the wage increases. The first report was published on 23 June 2011 and presented on 23 September 2011 to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress. The main findings are presented herein.

17. In June 2011, the Bureau of Economic Analysis published the second GDP estimates for American Samoa and other United States territories, covering the period 2008-2009. Since 2009, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, under the Statistical Improvement Program, the Bureau produces such estimates with the aim of providing a comprehensive and objective measure of economic activity for the territories to support economic and financial decisions. According to the Bureau, the long-term goal of its joint effort with the Office of Insular Affairs is to integrate American Samoa and the other United States territories into the estimates of national GDP and the national income and product accounts, which are essential to a better understanding of the territories' economies.

18. The Territory's largest trading partner is New Zealand, followed by the United States, Australia, India, Indonesia and Japan. As previously reported, American Samoa imports some 90 per cent of goods and products, including food and petroleum products, machine parts, building materials, textiles and clothing.

B. Fisheries and agriculture

19. The Government Accountability Office report reflects concerns about American Samoa's loss of competitive advantage in the global tuna canning industry. The analysis presented shows that moving tuna processing plants to other

tariff-free countries with lower labour costs would significantly cut operational costs in the industry. The competitive advantage of American Samoa is severely compromised by the duty-free treatment granted by the federal Government to other countries such as Canada and Mexico, which benefit from provisions under the North American Free Trade Agreement that lifted tariffs in January 2008. The study also points out, however, that, the obvious advantages of moving operations to other countries notwithstanding, factors such as the remaining cannery's lease obligation up to and including 2013 and the cost of building new plants may hamper near-term relocation.

20. The company that owns the Samoa Tuna Processors cannery (formerly the Chicken of the Sea cannery) has begun shipments to the mainland United States. To support the local fishing industry, it will process and export fresh-chilled and frozen tuna while maintaining its focus on canned tuna processing. It is currently building a processing plant with cutting-edge features. In January 2011, the company Starkist Samoa was granted a tax exemption for the coming two years. This benefit had expired in 2010 and the plant had been operating for more than six months without tax incentives. Following the re-establishment of the tax exemption, the company plans to step up its production levels and hire additional workers.

21. The United States Congress approved the tax exemption and an additional one-year postponement of the minimum wage increase with the aim of supporting the tuna processing industry and helping American Samoa to regain its global competitiveness. American Samoa's Congressman has committed himself to obtaining from the United States Congress a review of the tax exemption policy, which applies only to companies already established in the Territory, in order to extend the benefits to new companies wishing to establish operations in American Samoa, including Tri Marine International, which recently acquired the tuna processing plant that closed in 2009.

22. Almost 90 per cent of all farms in the Territory operate on a subsistence basis, and prospects for agricultural development continue to be limited owing to the small amount of level land suitable for cultivation. At the same time, farmers in American Samoa benefit from assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and its Environmental quality incentives programme.

C. Tourism

23. Its tremendous potential notwithstanding, American Samoa remains relatively unrecognized by tourists, possibly because of its remote location.

24. In his 2011 State of the Territory address, the Governor said that he would continue to seek support from the United States Congress and the Department of the Interior to address the air transportation problem between American Samoa and Hawaii. In his view, the cabotage laws stood in the way of the Territory developing the tourism industry. The fares between Hawaii and the west coast of the United States were estimated at $500, while those between Hawaii and American Samoa were estimated at $1,200 or more. The situation, in his view, undermined any plans to develop tourism in the Territory. He also intended to request permission for flights between American Samoa and Australia, China, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea.

25. The tourism industry comprises approximately 7 per cent of the economy. A few businesses sell exclusively to the local market. According to the Visitors Bureau, in 2010 the Territory had 249 hotel rooms operating at less than 50 per cent occupancy.

D. Transport and communications

26. There are approximately 180 kilometres of public and primary paved roads and 235 kilometres of secondary village roads in American Samoa. The Federal Highway Administration Hawaii Federal-Aid Division has approved $49.3 million in emergency relief funds for the Territory's roads that were damaged by the earthquake and the tsunami in September 2009.

27. Pago Pago harbour, an all-weather deep-draught harbour, is one of the best natural deep-water harbours in the South Pacific and is of strategic importance to the region. The main dock is 1,000 feet long, handling ships of up to a 32-foot draught. The harbour provides the full complement of equipment and facilities. The ship repair facility features a 3,000-ton marine railway.

28. The four airports in the Territory are situated on the islands of Tutuila, Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u, respectively. Pago Pago International Airport is owned and operated by the territorial Government. The main airport is regularly served by a number of airlines that link American Samoa with Hawaii and the continental United States as well as other countries in the South Pacific. Within the Territory, Inter Island Airways offers regular flights to Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u.

29. The Territory has three FM stations and three AM stations, serving approximately 57,000 radios. One Government-owned television station broadcasts over three channels to approximately 14,000 television sets. Internet access is provided by the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, a semi-autonomous government agency.

E. Water, sanitation system and utilities

30. ASPA provides water, wastewater, solid-waste and electric services to customers on five of the seven islands. The Authority provides drinking water to 90 per cent of the Territory from wells, with the remaining 10 per cent being serviced by outer-village systems. According to a survey published in August 2010, the Authority loses up to 50 per cent of its water through leaky pipes. In some areas water has a high salt content. The survey also indicated that the design limitations of water pipes made their maintenance an extremely difficult task.

31. American Samoa depends entirely on diesel-generated power. Several projects have been launched to reduce this dependence and promote a healthy environment, such as a waste-to-energy project, and solar and wind technologies are being pursued. In April 2011, ASPA signed a subrecipient agreement with the American Samoa Government Territorial Energy Office to manage and install a ground-mounted photovoltaic system capable of generating 1 MW or more, funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Since waste management is recognized as a major public health and environmental concern for Pacific island

countries and territories, American Samoa has joined the region's strategy for solid waste management, which sets the strategic direction for the period 2010-2015.

IV. Social conditions

A. General

32. Known as "fa'asamoa", the Samoan way of life is based on the notion of mutual respect and sharing among the aiga (extended families), each featuring a common allegiance to a matai (chief), and it influences every aspect of the Territory's socio-economic fabric. Since 2008, the Territory's legislature has been working to further strengthen the use of the Samoan language in public schools, in tandem with English.

33. In 2011, the Pacific office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community published *The State of Pacific Youth 2011: Opportunities and Obstacles*, a report highlighting significant problems facing youth in the Pacific, including American Samoa, such as the high number of teenage pregnancies, the high proportion (26 per cent) of female teenage students physically forced to have sexual intercourse, and alcohol abuse.

B. Labour and immigration

34. According to the Government Accountability Office report, the total number of people employed in the Territory fell by 19 per cent between 2008 and 2009. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 temporary jobs created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act after the 2009 tsunami will disappear once federal funds are no longer available. The report shows that the number of workers in the tuna canning industry fell by 55 per cent between 2009 and 2010 following the closure of one plant in September 2009 and layoffs in the remaining cannery. As American Samoa's economy depends heavily on the tuna industry, that closure significantly affected the labour market and the economy. The report also notes that employers in the canning industry have taken measures to reduce costs, such as laying off workers, reducing overtime, cutting benefits, freezing hiring and increasing prices. Similar measures are envisaged in 2012, including the dismissal of more workers.

35. Before the initial minimum wage increase in 2007, about one third of workers in American Samoa were employed by the two canneries. More than three quarters of cannery employees were foreign workers from neighbouring Samoa. In its comments on the Government Accountability Office report, the Government of American Samoa said that employment losses and other aspects of economic decline in American Samoa were greater than suggested in the report. It also indicated that the application of the United States minimum wage to American Samoa, pursuant to the scheduled increases mandated by Congress, continued to devastate American Samoa's economy and labour market. It further pointed out that the report ignored the facts that the minimum wage increases had adversely affected the entire economy and not only the canneries and that the indirect effects of the cannery employment losses had yet to run their course as they often required several years fully to materialize. It further noted that the report downplayed the fact that the

damage to date stemmed from only 3 of 10 scheduled minimum wage increases and ignored evidence that continued increases in the minimum wage made economic recovery increasingly unlikely.

36. American Samoa has its own immigration laws and entry conditions into the Territory, which are not the same as those applicable to the United States. As previously reported, a new immigration law for American Samoa has entered into force, giving the Attorney-General, rather than a Government-appointed board, full authority over the granting of permanent resident status.

C. Education

37. Education in American Samoa is compulsory from 6 to 18 years of age. The education system is broadly based on that of the United States. According to the American Samoa Department of Education, there are 24 early childhood education centres, 23 elementary schools and 6 high schools in the Territory. The Department serves over 14,150 students in grades kindergarten to 12.

38. American Samoa has a literacy rate of approximately 97 per cent. There are five school districts, each centred on a high school together with lower level elementary or "feeder schools". The Department has 472 teachers in elementary education, 191 teaching personnel in secondary education, 18 in vocational education, 202 in special education and 118 in early childhood education.

39. The American Samoa Community College offers two-year degree courses in the arts and sciences and certificate programmes of proficiency in vocational and clerical skills, business and nursing.

40. In 2011, Aunuu, Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands were designated teacher shortage areas by the United States Department of Education in response to a request submitted by the American Samoa Department of Education. A similar request, for the school year 2011-2012, which begins in late August in American Samoa, was also granted.

D. Public health

41. According to the latest country health information profile produced by the World Health Organization (WHO), life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 69.3 years for men and 75.9 years for women. WHO data further show that the Territory has made significant progress in primary health care in recent years: the infant mortality rate fell from 15.2 per 1,000 live births in 2004 to 11.9 in 2008, and the under-five mortality rate was 4.9 per 1,000 live births in 2002.

42. Some 16 per cent of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center budget comes from the federal Government; most of the funds are used to purchase medical supplies. Vaccines and pharmaceuticals are purchased in the United States, as the Food and Drug Administration prohibits the purchase of medicines elsewhere. Logistical and financial factors cause frequent scarcity problems.

43. In 2010, the Territory received $1 million in federal funds through the grants to states for health insurance premium review programme. This programme, also known as the rate review grant programme, was authorized under the health-care

reform enacted through the landmark Affordable Care Act, passed by the United States Congress in March 2010. The rate review grant is designed to help states and territories establish a process to monitor health insurance premiums offered by insurance companies and to ensure that consumers are protected from unreasonable, unjustified or excessive premium increases.

44. According to WHO, the morbidity pattern has fundamentally changed over the past three decades, with an increase in non-communicable diseases stemming from modernization and lifestyle changes. Inappropriate nutrition and physical inactivity are the leading cause of significant increases in obesity in both sexes and, especially, young people.

E. Crime and public safety

45. In April 2010, the Governor announced plans to increase penalties for those convicted of child sexual abuse. The Administration planned to submit to the Fono a bill that would provide for a life sentence without possibility of parole. As previously reported, the Governor had also established the Sexual Offender Registration Notification Act Working Group to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act and to provide counsel and input into strategic planning, development and implementation of the sex offender registry. According to the already mentioned UNICEF report, sexual abuse affects 25 per cent of high school minors.

46. The Territory has continued to enhance cooperation with the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police organization and the United States Department of Justice through its newly established Office of Territorial and International Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement.

V. Environmental protection and disaster preparedness

47. The American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency, funded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, is mandated to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment: air, water and land.

48. Just as all South Pacific countries, American Samoa faces the problem of safe disposal of solid and liquid waste, particularly as a result of urbanization. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, point source pollution from industrial waste and sewage, inappropriately sited and poorly managed garbage dumps, and disposal of toxic chemicals is a significant contributor to marine pollution and coastal degradation. Concern is also growing that toxic and hazardous waste may be brought to the region from developed countries for disposal.

49. In August 2010, nearly a year after the tragic tsunami, American Samoa was ready to install a $1.9 million tsunami warning siren system funded by the United States Department of Homeland Security. The system, officially commissioned in September 2011, consists of a network of 46 sirens with messages in both English and Samoan.

VI. Relations with international organizations and partners

50. American Samoa has been an associate member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific since 1988. International labour conventions and recommendations are applicable to it. The Territory belongs to various regional bodies of the United Nations system, including WHO, for which it falls under the Regional Office for the Western Pacific and the Western Pacific Regional Centre for the Promotion of Environmental Planning and Applied Studies.

51. American Samoa is a member of several regional organizations, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Pacific Basin Development Council, the Pacific Tuna Development Foundation, the Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organizations, the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, the Pacific Asia Travel Association, and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. The Territory participates in the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission and the Pacific Community Coastal Fisheries Programme. American Samoa also belongs to United States organizations, such as the National and Western Governors' Associations. The Government of American Samoa has signed memorandums of understanding with the Governments of Samoa and Tonga on mutual economic cooperation and has sent trade missions to a number of countries in the Pacific region.

52. At the forty-second Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting, held in September 2011 in Auckland, New Zealand, American Samoa was accorded observer status. The Territory also holds observer status with the Alliance of Small Island States.

VII. Future status of the Territory

A. Position of the territorial Government

53. Section I of the present working paper reflects recent developments in American Samoa concerning its future political status.

B. Position of the administering Power

54. In a letter dated 2 November 2006 addressed to Congressman Faleomavaega, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs set forth the position of the Government of the United States on the status of American Samoa and other United States insular areas, which was considered equally valid for 2010. In his letter, the Assistant Secretary indicated that the status of the insular areas regarding their political relations with the federal Government was an internal United States issue, and not one that came under the purview of the Special Committee. He also stated that the Special Committee had no authority to alter in any way the relationship between the United States and those territories and no mandate to engage the United States in negotiations on their status. He further stated that, at the same time, in accordance with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to provide regularly to the United Nations statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to the economic, social and educational conditions, the federal Government did submit annual updates on United States territories to the Special Committee as a demonstration of United States cooperation

as an administering Power and to correct any errors in information that the Special Committee might have received from other sources.

C. Action by the General Assembly

55. On 9 December 2011, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolutions 66/89 A and B, based on the report of the Special Committee transmitted to the General Assembly (A/66/23) and its subsequent consideration by the Fourth Committee. Section I of resolution 66/89 B concerns American Samoa. Under the operative paragraphs of that section, the General Assembly:

1. *Takes note* that, at the November 2010 general elections, voters defeated the proposed amendments to the 1967 revised Constitution of American Samoa adopted at the fourth Constitutional Convention, held in June 2010;

2. *Welcomes* the work of the territorial Government with respect to moving forward on political status, local autonomy and self-governance issues with a view to making political and economic progress;

3. *Expresses its appreciation* for the invitation extended in 2011 to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the Governor of American Samoa to send a visiting mission to the Territory, calls upon the administering Power to facilitate such a mission if the territorial Government so desires, and requests the Chair of the Special Committee to take all the steps necessary to that end;

4. *Requests* the administering Power to assist the Territory by facilitating its work concerning a public awareness programme, consistent with Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations, and, in that regard, calls upon the relevant United Nations organizations to provide assistance to the Territory, if requested;

5. *Calls upon* the administering Power to assist the territorial Government in the diversification and sustainability of the economy of the Territory and to address employment and cost-of-living issues;

6. *Welcomes* the invitation to American Samoa in 2011 to become Pacific Islands Forum observer.